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ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTAL SELECTION TESTS FOR SPECIAL FORCES OFF--ETC(U)

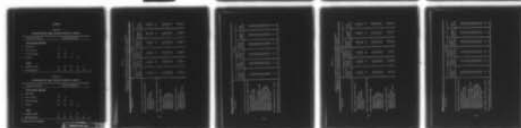
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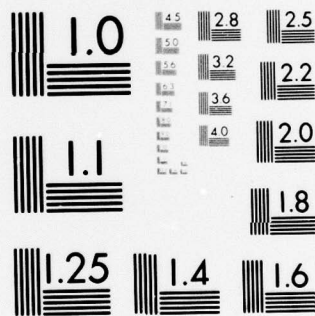
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**ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTAL SELECTION TESTS
FOR SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER TRAINING**

April 1965

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6 ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTAL SELECTION TESTS FOR
SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER TRAINING,

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ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTAL SELECTION TESTS FOR SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER TRAINING

BRIEF

Requirement:

The Army Special Warfare Center has requested research to determine, as a means of selecting officers for Special Forces training, what qualities in an officer will enable him to perform his special warfare mission with a high degree of effectiveness.

Procedure:

Experimental measures were assembled to provide a broad coverage of personal characteristics hypothesized to be relevant to performance in unconventional warfare missions. As a first step toward selecting content for a selection battery, the tests were administered to a total of 238 officers at the outset of training and analyzed for effectiveness in predicting academic grades, peer ratings, and performance on a field exercise at close of training.

Findings:

Two cognitive tests, the Special Forces Qualifying Examination (synonyms-antonyms, verbal analogies, and mathematics) and the Army Language Aptitude Test showed promise of useful prediction of academic grades and borderline prediction of peer ratings.

None of the experimental measures was usefully predictive of evaluations of performance on the training exercise.

Utilization of Findings:

The study yielded preliminary indications of the usefulness of different kinds of tests for prediction of performance of officers in Special Forces training. These and additional measures will be evaluated as predictors of officer performance in post-training situations, measures of which are now being collected.

ANALYSIS OF EXPERIMENTAL SELECTION TESTS FOR SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER TRAINING

The Army Special Warfare Center, in April 1963, requested that the U. S. Army Personnel Research Office undertake a research effort to determine "those qualities desired in an officer which will enable him to perform his special warfare mission to the maximum degree." As the first phase of this research, the training program for Special Forces officers was examined for suitable intermediate criteria, and a number of potential predictors were subjected to preliminary validation.

BACKGROUND

The Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina offers courses in three specialized areas: psychological operations, counterinsurgency, and unconventional warfare. The present study was concerned with the unconventional warfare course, since it is the one in which Special Forces officers receive their training. Officers may volunteer or they may be assigned to training. To be admitted to the course, an officer must be airborne qualified, meet a certain standard of physical fitness, be able to swim, and have passed a security check. The unconventional warfare course is currently 12 weeks long. When data were collected early in 1964, the course proper ran for only 8 weeks, but was preceded by a 4-week Special Warfare Staff Officer course which subsequently merged with the specialty course.

The final two weeks of the unconventional warfare course for Special Forces officers consists of a field training exercise (FTX) in which the students, divided into detachments of 10 to 14 each, can apply the knowledge and skills acquired in previous classroom instruction. Upon completion of training, most officers report to a Special Forces group and are integrated into a detachment. A few assume staff positions at the Special Warfare Center. Before being sent on a mission, an officer assigned to a detachment may undergo additional training. This consists of foreign language training, area training in which the physical and cultural conditions to be found in the geographical area of the mission are studied, and training maneuvers.

The duties of a Special Forces officer can vary widely depending on the nature of the mission, type of detachment, and, of course, the officer's grade. A typical mission into a country such as South Vietnam might involve establishment of military camps in an isolated and primitive mountain region where indigenous personnel are trained in the various aspects of guerrilla warfare. In addition, Special Forces officers might serve in an advisory capacity to the Vietnamese military leaders and also undertake certain civic action programs designed to improve living conditions.

PROCEDURE

SAMPLE

Two samples of officers were employed in the present validation study. The first consisted of 130 officers who entered training in January 1964 and the second of 108 officers who entered training in April 1964. The first sample was composed of approximately 40% lieutenants, 45% captains, and 15% majors and lieutenant colonels, while the second sample contained 75% lieutenants and 25% higher ranking officers. Aside from the difference in distribution of grades and the attendant differences in age and military experience between the two samples, there were no apparent psychological differences.

Experimental tests were administered to the officers at the outset of training. A total of 29 predictors including scores on tests and on special scales as well as composite scores, were obtained on each officer. No prominent differences between the two samples existed with respect to mean scores on the various predictors or items of the Personal History Questionnaire.

CRITERIA OF EFFECTIVENESS

In the present early phase of research to develop improved means of selecting officers for Special Forces training, focus was on prediction of performance during training activities conducted at the Special Warfare School. Essentially, there were three measures of success in training: academic grade, evaluation of performance in the field training exercise (FTX), and peer ratings. Each measure was expected to reflect a somewhat different aspect of the officer's competence. Academic standing, represented by a composite of several examination scores, is considered to reflect comprehension and retention of material covered in the classroom. The FTX, on the other hand, calls for application of classroom information as well as the more general ability to perform effectively on a demanding practical exercise. The FTX measure consisted of a composite score derived from a faculty member's evaluation of various aspects of the officer's performance. Peer ratings of each officer were made by other officers in his detachment shortly after completion of the FTX. Ratings were made of three different characteristics of the individual: estimated effectiveness in guerrilla warfare, civic action, and cross-cultural operations. In addition, rating on a seven-point scale of overall effectiveness as a Special Forces officer was obtained.

The four peer ratings were all quite closely related, tending to rank the officers in much the same order.¹ Ratings on effectiveness in guerrilla warfare were closest to the rating on overall officer effectiveness. These results suggest that raters did not distinguish clearly among the three specific characteristics and that guerrilla effectiveness--or some derivative of it--was being rated on all scales. This emphasis is quite understandable since training is devoted primarily to guerrilla warfare with little or no training in civic action or cross-cultural activity.

¹ Details of analysis of the three criteria are presented in Tables 1 and 2 of the Appendix.

Both FTX and peer ratings tended to be independent of academic grades, indicating that difference in classroom performance has little relevance for practical performance as assessed by the judgments of peer and cadre in a training situation.

All experimental predictors were analyzed in relation to these measures of training performance.

PREDICTORS

Selection of the 29 experimental measures was dictated not only by an analysis of the training situation but also by information regarding the job duties of officers on Special Forces missions, since an ultimate objective is to develop predictors of performance on missions. Certain of the predictors were selected with specific hypotheses in mind, others to provide a broad coverage of psychological variables which might be appropriate to the unconventional nature of Special Forces operations. A description of the predictor instruments follows:

Special Forces Qualifying Examination (PT 4438). This test is a three-part cognitive measure derived from the existing pool of items having validity for the prediction of officer performance in training situations. Part I consists of 45 words, for each of which the examinee selects a synonym or antonym from among four alternatives. Part II, consisting of 30 items, requires that the examinee complete verbal relationships in a way that will be analogous to models that have been presented. Part III is quantitative in nature and contains 30 elementary mathematics problems. A total of 50 minutes is allowed for completion of the three parts. Since a measure of general scholastic aptitude was desired, scores for the three parts were combined to yield a composite score.

Army Language Aptitude Test, Form I (DA Form 6131). The ALAT is a 59-item test requiring 45 minutes for administration. The examinee is presented with the vocabulary and grammar of the artificial language which is to be used for translations and the completion of sentences. The ALAT has been validated against a criterion of course grades at the Army Language School (Berkhouse, Woods, and Sternberg, 1959). The test was considered relevant for Special Forces in that the performance of officers may often be facilitated by the ability rapidly to acquire and utilize the language of the indigenous population. Furthermore, the academic phase of training may call for verbal reasoning ability of the type that is reflected in this test.

Special Forces Selection Battery (DA Forms 6140, 6141, 6142). The battery consists of three tests--Critical Decisions, Locations, and Suitability Inventory. It requires approximately 2 1/2 hours to administer. The battery, which was previously validated against a criterion of Special Forces trainee performance on a field exercise (Berkhouse, 1963), is currently an operational instrument for selection of Special Forces enlisted men. Since the abilities which it purportedly measures are also relevant to the duties of officers, it has been included in the present study.

The Critical Decisions Test describes problem situations requiring the exercise of practical judgment for solution. The Locations Test requires the examinee to orient himself spatially with respect to 52 photographs of various outdoor scenes. The Suitability Inventory presents the examinee with 112 statements dealing with personal behavior which he can either accept or disclaim as applying to himself. The test is intended to measure psychological adjustment and emotional stability, characteristics that are particularly relevant to performance under the stress of special warfare.

Personal Assessment Blank (PT 4344) and Personal Description Blank (PT 4324 and PT 4441). The PAB and Part I of the PDB, developed by Gordon (1960, 1956, 1953), collectively contain 14 scales measuring a wide variety of personality traits--need for social support, conformity, need for recognition, independence, benevolence, leadership, responsibility, emotional stability, sociability, cautiousness, original thinking, quality of personal relations, and vigor.

Part II of the PDB contains three scales measuring work orientation. These scales were developed by Bass (1960) who conceived of three kinds of orientation that a person can have toward a job. The task-oriented individual is concerned primarily with the work itself--with problems inherent in the task before him. The interaction-oriented person is most concerned with the social aspects of a job--with the relationships that he can establish with other people on the job. The self-oriented person is concerned mainly with his own personal gain--with personal rewards such as recognition and advancement.

Each item of the work orientation measure and the PAB consists of three statements, each representing a different scale, which the examinee ranks with respect to preference or agreement. The items contained in Part I of the PDB are similar to the above, but the statements are arranged in tetrads and only the extremes are ranked. Approximately one hour is required for administration of the PDB and 20 minutes for the PAB.

Personal History Questionnaire - III and IV (PT 4470 and PT 4482). PHQ-III, which was administered to the first sample, and the slightly modified IV version which was administered to the second sample, contain 76 and 70 background items, respectively. The items, permitting from two to five alternative responses, sample such areas of behavior as educational history, home life, recreational habits, work experience, and military history. Certain of the items are presumed to measure specific characteristics which may be related to Special Forces performance. Some items bear upon the individual's inclination to assume responsibility, his interest in outdoor activities, and his risk-taking tendencies. Other items sample a wide range of behavioral categories identified through the examination of similar instruments used both within and outside the Army (Glennon, Albright, and Owens, undated). Finally, some items were included to round out the background picture. Administration time is approximately thirty minutes.

Officer Description List, Form A and Form B (PT's 4453, 4455, 4478, 4480, and 4481). The instrument consists of 50 adjectives and phrases appropriate for describing persons. In Form A, the examinee describes himself by sorting

the items into a five-category quasi-normal distribution. Form B uses the same items and distribution, but this time the examinee is instructed to use them to describe the "good and effective" Special Forces officer. The Personal Description List, then, is similar to the conventional adjective checklist, but with the important difference that the forced distribution of the former provides some control over social desirability response set. Self-description lists of the same general type have been shown to be valid predictors of performance in other military studies (Woodworth and Mackinnon, 1958).

Form B was included primarily on theoretical grounds. Regardless of the man's self-perception, he may have a more or less correct perception of the effective Special Forces officer. Insofar as he happens to recognize what characteristics contribute to effective performance, he is in a better position to adapt to the requirements of the situation. Also, he may be less likely to experience disappointment with what he finds.

Form A and Form B, in addition to being considered separate instruments, were considered together as a single instrument. The relationship between self-perception and perception of the effective Special Forces officer may itself constitute a valid predictor of performance. In other words, degree of congruence between Form A and Form B descriptions may be an indication of the extent to which the man sees himself as fitting in or belonging to the reference group. Thus, indirectly, the relationship may reflect motivation for Special Forces.

In the development of this instrument, descriptions of effective officers elicited by open-end questions in an earlier study were content analyzed. Several categories of description emerged, and items were selected to represent the categories. An examination of existing self-description instruments provided additional items; still other items were introduced to round out the set. The preliminary version of the instrument was administered to an officer sample, and the psychometric properties of the items were examined. The shortening and refinement suggested by the analysis resulted in Form A (PT 4453) and Form B (PT 4455) which were administered to the first sample of the present study. In revised format, the instruments were then administered to the second sample of the present study as PT 4478, PT 4480, and PT 4481. However, both versions contain the same 50 adjectives. Administration time for Forms A and B taken together is about 30 minutes.

Preference for Army Duties (PT 4331). This instrument was included in order to round out the present experimental test battery by providing some measure of occupational interests. The PAD, adapted from a test developed for the Navy (Gordon and Alf, 1963), contains 30 triplets. Statements comprising the triplets describe various activities performed by Army personnel. For each item, the examinee selects the activity he "likes most" and the one he "dislikes most". The test yields scores on five interest scales: medical, mechanical, electronic, hazardous duty, and clerical. Total time required for administration is 30 minutes.

RESULTS

PREDICTION OF ACADEMIC GRADES

The only clear predictors of academic success--as represented by course grades--were the two measures of intellectual ability--the Special Forces Qualifying Examination and the Army Language Aptitude Test. Although these two tests are highly related, their use in combination would result in considerable gain in prediction. For example, if a cut-off score at the tenth percentile on the combined predictor is employed, 90% of those officers who fall into the lowest quartile on the criterion would be eliminated. If either SFQE or ALAT is employed alone, only 75% and 60%, respectively, would be eliminated with a tenth percentile cut-off. The advantage of combining scores holds for other cut-points as well.

Aside from the two cognitive tests, no experimental tests proved effective in predicting any of the measures of success in training. However, one kind of noncognitive predictor displayed some promise. Two measures of this kind were the Suitability Inventory of the Special Forces Selection Battery and the Emotional Stability scale of the Personal Description Blank.²

PREDICTION OF PEER RATINGS

Prediction of peer ratings tended to be either low or inconsistent for the two samples. Best prediction was generated by the Special Forces Qualifying Examination and Army Language Aptitude Test for ratings of effectiveness in civic action. In the judgment of peers, intellectual ability seemed most relevant to an officer's performance of civic action duties. The two cognitive predictors were also modestly predictive of overall effectiveness. These results may reflect a halo produced by academic performance, of which peers are aware, or it may reflect the genuine contribution of intelligence of the type measured by the two instruments to estimated effectiveness.

The clerical scale of the Preference for Army Duties was somewhat related--negatively--to overall effectiveness. Apparently, clerical interests are considered incompatible with outdoor type activities of Special Forces. The pattern of prediction obtained with the overall effectiveness rating also held for ratings of guerrilla effectiveness, but to a lesser extent. In essence, there was no prediction of the overall rating. Prediction of ratings of effectiveness in situations involving cross-cultural interactions was also generally low. The Personal Relations Scale of the Personal Description Blank produced the highest unbiased correlation of around .20. Peers, of course, had no real way of assessing this criterion in the present training situation; they evidently based their estimation to some degree on the quality of the ratee's personal relations.

² Results of the correlational analysis are shown in the appendix tables. Tables 1 and 2 show intercorrelations of the three measures of success in training. Validity coefficients of the 29 predictors with the training measures are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

In general, this study offered little promise for developing instruments to predict peer ratings. However, peer ratings are intermediate measures whose relevance for the ultimate criterion of actual performance on Special Forces missions remains to be established. It is clear that these peer ratings measure something distinct from what is being measured by the psychological tests; quite possibly the ratings themselves may prove useful in the prediction of field criteria.

PREDICTION OF THE FIELD TRAINING EXERCISE

None of the predictors were effective in predicting the FTX score in either officer sample. Again, the reliability of the criterion measure can be questioned, especially since each officer was evaluated by only one cadre officer. Further, the criterion may be too complex to be predicted by a single variable.

ITEM ANALYSIS

Personal Description List. Since no scoring formula existed for the Personal Description List, the 50 items from each of the two forms were individually correlated with academic grades, field exercise evaluations, and peer ratings of overall effectiveness. The analysis provided very little that is useful for selection purposes. No items on either form held up in the second sample against the field exercise or peer rating criteria. Against course grades, only four Form A items held up, and prediction was low. However, good prediction of course grades is already available by means of the cognitive tests, and the Personal Description List is not likely to contribute anything further.

Personal History Questionnaire. Each response alternative on the Personal History Questionnaire was correlated with academic grades, field exercise evaluations, and peer ratings of overall effectiveness. Five items provided significant prediction of course grades (at the .05 level or better) in both samples. As would be expected, these items involved educational accomplishments. Since these background variables probably are reflected in the cognitive test scores, it is doubtful whether prediction would be materially improved by including them in a selection battery. Only four items held up in a second sample against peer ratings, and possibly one or two of these can be ascribed to chance. No items held up for the prediction of performance on the field exercise. It does not appear, then, that the Personal History Questionnaire will be useful in the prediction of training criteria.

CONCLUSIONS

Of the measures tried out, the Special Forces Qualifying Examination and the Army Language Aptitude Test were fairly promising predictors of course grades but not of the other training measures. The usefulness of the prediction afforded by these two tests will depend upon such factors as minimum academic requirement and number of officers needed in Special Forces in relation to the number available for training.

The training measures are, of course, intermediate criteria; their relevance for the final mission criteria has yet to be established. The predictor instruments which were found to be ineffective in the present study might nonetheless be valid for subsequent criteria. Officer evaluations in post-training situations are currently being collected, and the second phase of research will examine the experimental measures as predictors of these evaluations, as well as the usefulness of the intermediate criteria used in the present study in predicting later performance.

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APPENDIX

Table A-1

INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG TRAINING CRITERIA FOR SAMPLE 1

Training Criteria	Intercorrelations					
<u>Effectiveness Ratings:</u>						
1. Guerrilla	<u>1</u>					
2. Civic Action	.73	<u>2</u>				
3. Cross-Cultural	.70	.85	<u>3</u>			
4. Overall	.91	.74	.70	<u>4</u>		
<u>Other:</u>						
5. Academic Grade	.14	.20	.06	.14	<u>5</u>	
6. FTX Evaluation	.42	.34	.38	.37	.03	<u>6</u>

Table A-2

INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG TRAINING CRITERIA FOR SAMPLE 2

Training Criteria	Intercorrelations				
<u>Effectiveness Ratings:</u>					
1. Guerrilla	<u>1</u>				
2. Civic Action	.63	<u>2</u>			
3. Cross-Cultural	.52	.73	<u>3</u>		
4. Overall	.87	.65	.53	<u>4</u>	
<u>Other:</u>					
5. Academic Grade	a	a	a	.31	<u>5</u>
6. FTX Evaluation	.54	.40	.35	.57	.15 <u>6</u>

^aCorrelation not computed.

Table A-3

CORRELATION OF EXPERIMENTAL PREDICTORS WITH MEASURES OF TRAINING
PERFORMANCE OF SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER TRAINEES IN SAMPLE 1

Predictors	Criteria					
	Guerilla Effect. Rating	Civic Action Effect. Rating	Cross-Cultural Effect. Rating	Overall Effect. Rating	Academic Grade	FTX Eval.
Special Forces Selection Battery						
Location Test	.12	-.02	.00	.15	.08	.09
Critical Decisions	.04	-.01	-.06	.05	.12	.05
Suitability Inventory	.10	.07	.01	.09	.47	.09
Total Score	.14	.03	-.02	.16	.39	.12
Special Forces Qualifying Examination	.13	.30	.16	.18	.54	-.10
Personal Assessment Blank						
Support Scale	.07	.02	.03	.15	-.03	-.15
Conformity Scale	-.14	-.10	-.06	-.22	-.10	.01
Recognition Scale	.13	.02	.04	.14	-.08	-.08
Independence Scale	-.08	-.12	-.12	-.07	.12	-.15
Benevolence Scale	-.02	.11	.09	-.02	-.05	.13
Leadership Scale	.10	.09	.05	.09	.13	.20
Personal Description Blank						
Ascendency Scale	.16	.27	.17	.17	.13	.21
Responsibility Scale	.07	.02	.04	.00	.03	.20
Emotional Stability Scale	.13	-.02	-.05	.04	.18	.07
Sociability Scale	.04	.17	.16	.11	.01	.13

Table A-3 (Cont'd)

Predictors	Criteria					
	Guerrilla Effect. Rating	Civic Action Effect. Rating	Cross-Cultural Effect. Rating	Overall Effect. Rating	Academic Grade	FTX Eval.
Personnel Description Blank (Cont'd)						
Cautiousness Scale	.05	.04	.05	.00	.10	.13
Original Thinking Scale	-.06	.09	.02	-.08	.20	.16
Personal Relations Scale	.06	.11	.19	.09	.10	.07
Vigor Scale	.02	.02	-.09	-.04	.10	.21
Self-Orientation Scale	.03	.00	-.03	.08	.04	-.07
Interaction Orientation Scale	.05	.03	.13	.08	-.28	.04
Task Orientation Scale	-.07	-.02	-.08	-.15	.21	.04
Clerical Preference Scale	-.15	-.10	-.01	-.19	-.10	-.01
Mechanical Preference Scale	.06	.03	-.02	.03	-.14	.01
Electronic Preference Scale	.01	-.01	.00	-.03	.00	-.04
Medical Preference Scale	.00	.16	.15	.09	.08	.04
Hazardous Duty Scale	.09	-.11	-.15	.09	.16	.01
Army Language Aptitude Test, Form I	.13	.27	.20	.20	.43	.00
Personal Description List, z Score	.03	-.10	-.12	.02	.23	-.02

Table A-4

CORRELATION OF EXPERIMENTAL PREDICTORS WITH MEASURES OF TRAINING
PERFORMANCE OF SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER TRAINEES IN SAMPLE 2

Predictors	Criteria					
	Guerrilla Effect. Rating	Civic Action Effect. Rating	Cross- Cultural Effect. Rating	Overall Effect. Rating	Academic Grade	FTX Eval.
Special Forces Selection Battery						
Locations Test	.09	.05	.05	.20	.19	.15
Critical Decisions	-.07	-.02	-.05	-.10	.08	-.19
Suitability Inventory	.15	.08	-.03	.11	.06	.02
Total Score	.07	.06	-.02	.09	.12	-.03
Special Forces Qualifying Examination	.18	.31	.07	.18	.46	.10
Personal Assessment Blank						
Support Scale	.03	-.07	-.17	-.08	.05	.01
Conformity Scale	-.08	-.10	-.02	-.05	-.07	.00
Recognition Scale	.16	.02	.04	.04	.23	.10
Independence Scale	-.03	.15	.07	.02	.07	-.09
Benevolence Scale	-.03	.01	.23	.05	-.20	.05
Leadership Scale	-.02	-.01	-.10	.01	-.03	-.05
Personal Description Blank						
Ascendancy Scale	.03	-.06	-.13	.02	-.24	.05
Responsibility Scale	.16	.16	.17	.20	.16	.08
Emotional Stability Scale	.17	.09	.15	.16	.23	.11
Sociability Scale	-.04	-.11	-.19	-.03	-.33	-.04

Table A-4 (Cont'd)

Predictors	Criteria					
	Guerrilla Effect. Rating	Civic Action Effect. Rating	Cross-Cultural Effect. Rating	Overall Effect. Rating	Academic Grade	FTX Eval.
Personal Description Blank (Cont'd)						
Cautiousness Scale	-.06	.13	.14	.02	.22	-.04
Original Thinking Scale	-.05	.11	.09	.04	.05	.00
Personal Relations Scale	.06	.17	.24	.14	.10	-.11
Vigor Scale	.06	.05	-.02	.10	-.13	-.10
Self-Orientation Scale	.13	-.01	-.06	.05	.07	.03
Interaction Orientation Scale	-.08	-.07	.04	-.13	-.15	-.03
Task Orientation Scale	-.07	.08	.03	.07	.07	.00
Clerical Preference Scale	-.15	-.03	-.11	-.22	-.09	-.09
Mechanical Preference Scale	.04	.10	.09	.08	.03	-.01
Electronic Preference Scale	.04	.06	.05	.08	.12	.17
Medical Preference Scale	.04	.00	.14	.06	.10	.02
Hazardous Duty Scale	.06	-.16	-.09	.04	-.18	-.09
Army Language Aptitude Test, Form I	.16	.27	.09	.21	.37	.19
Personal Description List, z Score	.28	.15	.11	.29	.05	.14

nature of the mission, type of detachment, and, of course, the officer's grade. A typical mission into a country such as South Vietnam might involve establishment of military camps in an isolated and primitive mountain region where indigenous personnel are trained in the various aspects of guerrilla warfare. In addition, Special Forces officers might serve in an advisory capacity to the Vietnamese military leaders and also undertake certain civic action programs designed to improve living conditions.

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